STAR WARS
DARTH VADER
MARVEL
011
GILLEN
LARROCA
DELGADO

Book II, Part V

SHADOWS AND SECRETS

It is a period of foreboding. After the destruction of the Death Star by a Force-strong rebel pilot, the Sith Lord DARTH VADER has taken it upon himself to discover the pilot's true identity under the Empire's ever-watchful eye.

Using the expertise of droid-archaeologist DR. APHRA and her lethal droids BT-1 and 0-0-0, Vader looted a stash of credits from an Imperial cruiser, making it look like an accident. Aphra, using the stolen credits, located Commodex Tahn, the mortician who oversaw Senator Amidala's burial, and confirmed Vader's suspicions about the rebel pilot.

However, Vader's new adjutant Inspector Thanoth knows that all is not what it seems and plans to investigate further. Thanoth has discovered the location of an information broker called THE ANTE and has created a strike force to bring him down....

KIERON GILLEN
Writer

SALVADOR LARROCA
Artist

EDGAR DELGADO
Colorist

VC's JOE CARAMAGNA
Letterer

ADI GRANOV
Cover Artist

HEATHER ANTOS
Assistant Editor

JORDAN D. WHITE
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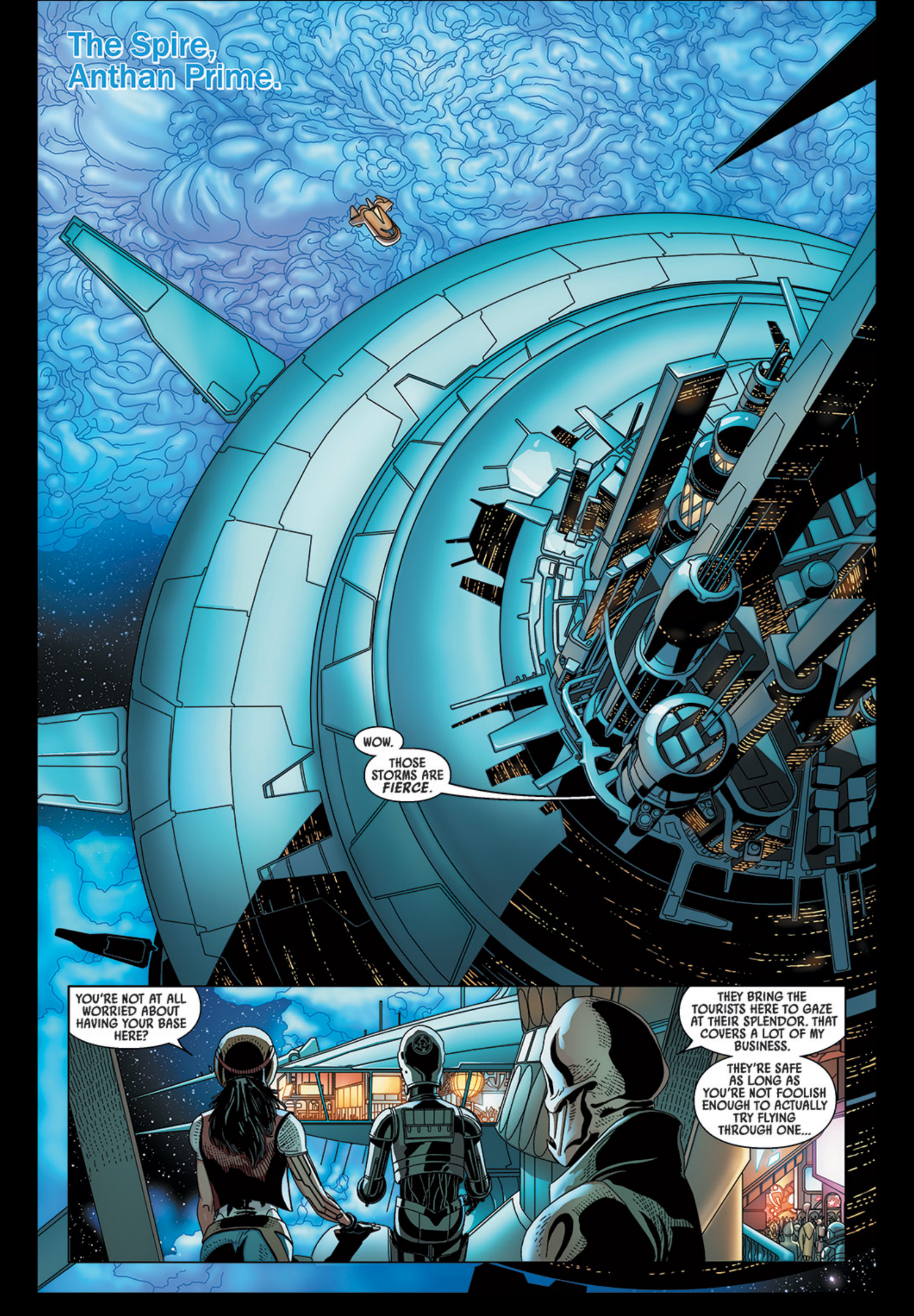

The Spire, Anthan Prime.
WOW.
THOSE STORMS ARE FIERCE.
YOU'RE NOT AT ALL WORRIED ABOUT HAVING YOUR BASE HERE?
THEY BRING THE TOURISTS HERE TO GAZE AT THEIR SPLENDOR. THAT COVERS A LOT OF MY BUSINESS.
THEY'RE SAFE AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT FOOLISH ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY TRY FLYING THROUGH ONE...

IT'S A LITTLE LIKE HAVING LOCALIZED ASTEROID BELTS, WITH CONSIDERABLY MORE STYLE.
CAN YOU NAVIGATE THEM?

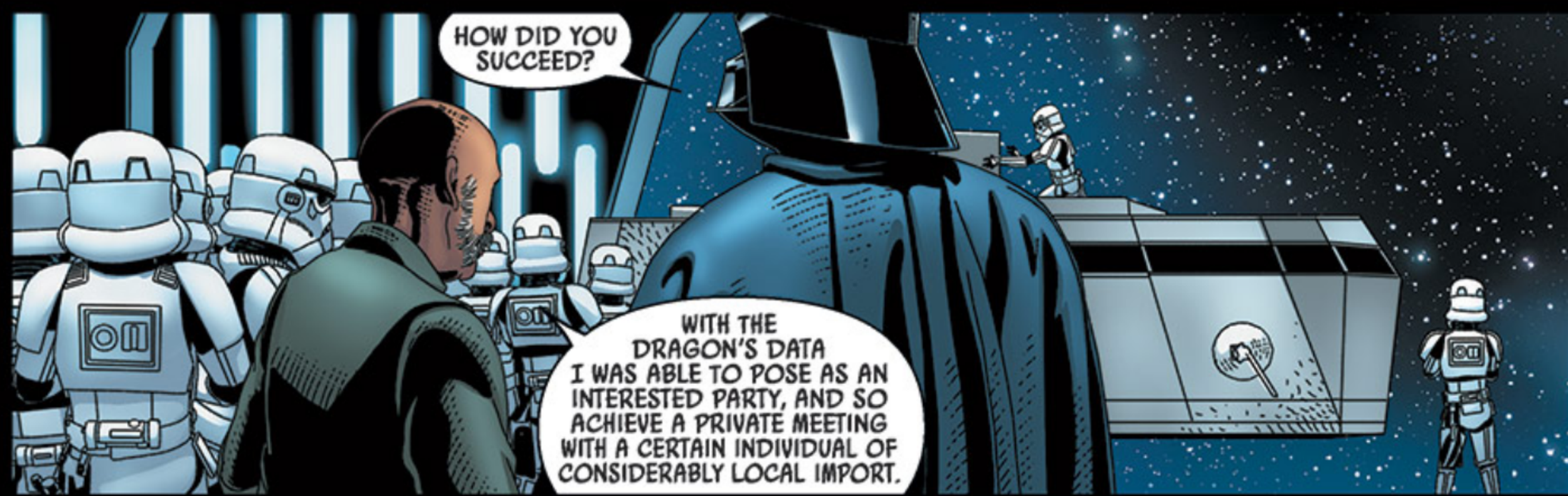
AS MUCH AS YOU CAN NAVIGATE AN ASTEROID BELT. AS IN, NOT RELIABLY.

I'M A MAN WHO LIKES SURE THINGS, APHRA.
THAT'S FUNNY. I'M A WOMAN WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE IN SURE THINGS.
AND, IF I MAY ADD, I'M A DROID WHO LIKES HOLOCHESS.
BLEEP! BLEEP!
AS IS BEETEE!

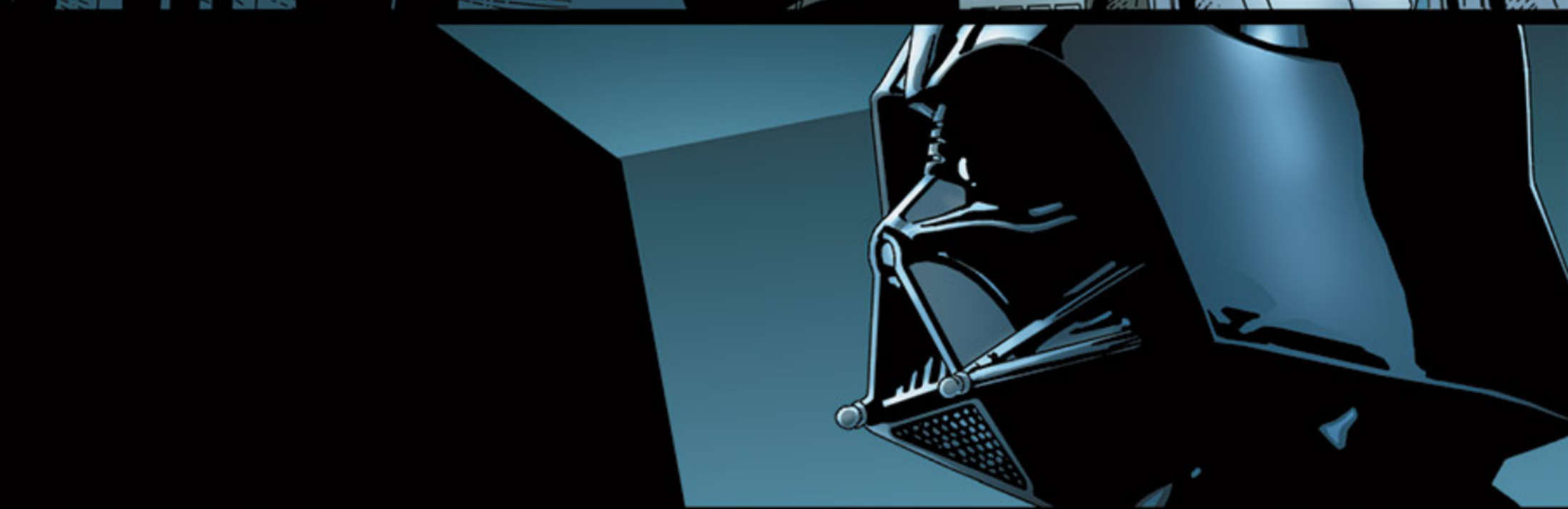
GO HAVE FUN, GUYS.

THE ANTE AND I CAN HANDLE OUR BUSINESS WITHOUT YOU...
"VADER? LORD VADER!"

I HAVE THE LEAD! WE MUST STRIKE, IMMEDIATELY!
IS THE STRIKE FORCE MARSHALLED?
I THOUGHT YOU THE GREAT INSPECTOR, THANOTH.
SURELY YOU CAN DEDUCE THAT YOURSELF?


HOW DID YOU SUCCEED?
WITH THE DRAGON'S DATA I WAS ABLE TO POSE AS AN INTERESTED PARTY, AND SO ACHIEVE A PRIVATE MEETING WITH A CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL OF CONSIDERABLY LOCAL IMPORT.

I'VE MANAGED TO FIND THE SECTOR'S PRIME INFO BROKER--THE ANTE.
HE'S CURRENTLY BASED IN THE UNDERSIDE OF THE SPIRE.



THIS IS... GOOD, THANOTH.
IT IS! HIS SYSTEMS WOULD INCLUDE DETAILS OF EVERYTHING OF NOTE THAT HAS OCCURRED. IF WE CAN GET THERE BEFORE HE MANAGES TO DESTROY THEM, THIS WOULD BE A GOLD MINE.
THE CLOCK IS TICKING!
THIS WILL LEAD US STRAIGHT TO THE LARCENISTS!
AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE?

WE NEED THE LOCATION OF A MAN. LUKE SKYWALKER. HE'S THE PILOT WHO DESTROYED THE DEATH--
I KNOW WHO HE IS AND WHY PEOPLE WOULD BE LOOKING FOR HIM.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S BEEN TRYING TO FIND THIS TALENTED YOUNG MAN. THERE ARE OTHER... INTERESTED PARTIES.
DEMAND HAS UPPED THE PRICE.
THAT IS AN EXCITING NUMBER.
WHO ELSE HAVE YOU SOLD IT TO?
NO ONE. THAT'S WHY THE PRICE IS SO HIGH.
AND AM I MEANT TO BELIEVE THAT?
ALL CRIME LORDS ARE GREEDY. WE WANT PROFITS AND POWER. WE DO NOT PURSUE THIS LINE OF WORK OUT OF ALTRUISM.
HOWEVER, MOST LACK SELF-CONTROL. I DO NOT.

IN THE LONG RUN, A RELIABLE TRADING PARTNER WILL MAKE MORE PROFIT.
EVENTUALLY SOMEONE WILL PAY MY PRICE, AND EVERYONE WILL BE BETTER OFF.

GLAD TO BE THAT SOMEONE.
KEEP THE CHANGE, EH?

YOU BRING THIS MUCH HERE? WITH NOTHING BUT A PAIR OF DROIDS FOR PROTECTION?
YOU *ARE* TRUSTING.

ALL CRIME LORDS ARE GREEDY, WANTING PROFITS, POWER AND PLUSH CUSHIONS.
BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU, THE ANTE, DO NOT LACK SELF-CONTROL AND BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, FANCY PREPARED SPEECH TO RECITE WHILE FRONTING DURING DEALS.

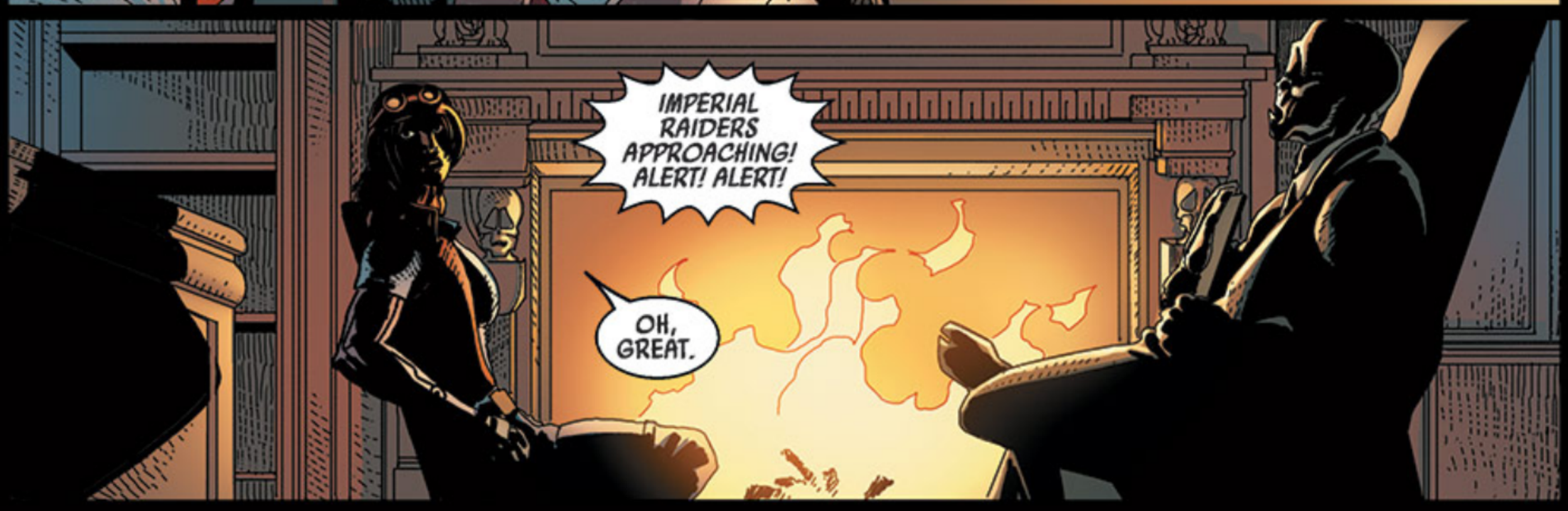
THIS IS A RATHER *LARGE* AMOUNT OF IMPERIAL CREDITS...
I HAD MY SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE SON-TUUL PRIDE'S FORTUNE...

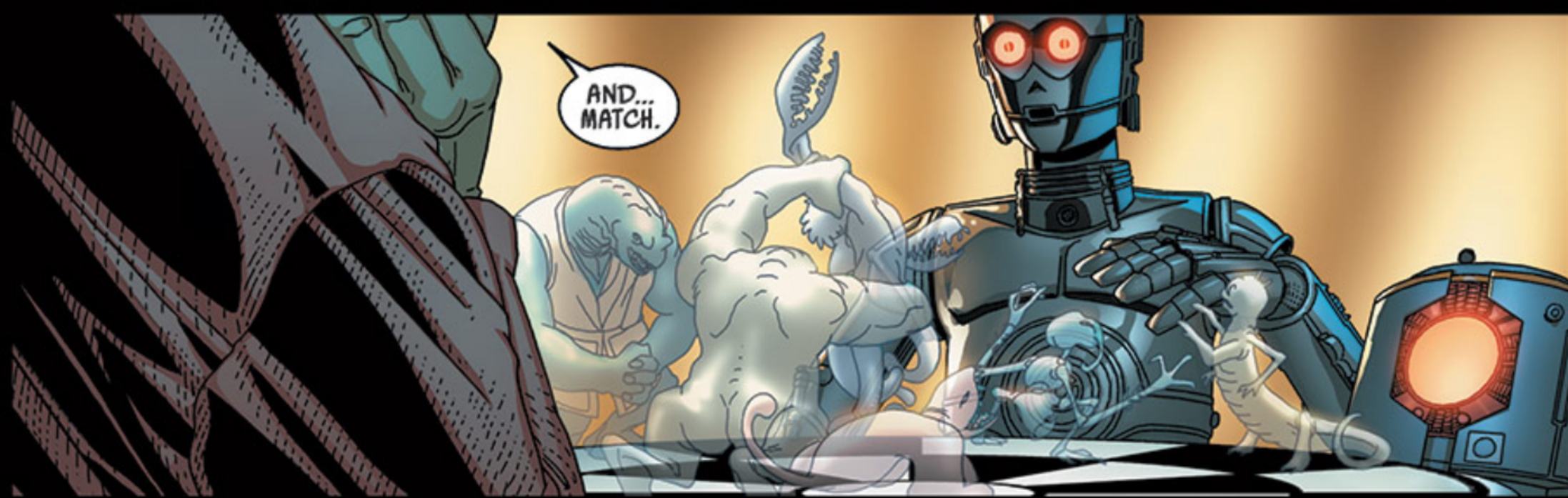
I'D SAY THIS VERY CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE WOULD CONFIRM MY PREJUDICES...

CAN WE STOP WITH WHAT I CAN ONLY PRESUME IS CRIME LORD FLIRTING? NO, I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOUR ENORMOUS UNDERCOVER OPERATION!
GIVE ME THE KID'S LOCATION AND LET ME GET OUT OF HERE.

HE'S ON VROGAS VAS.

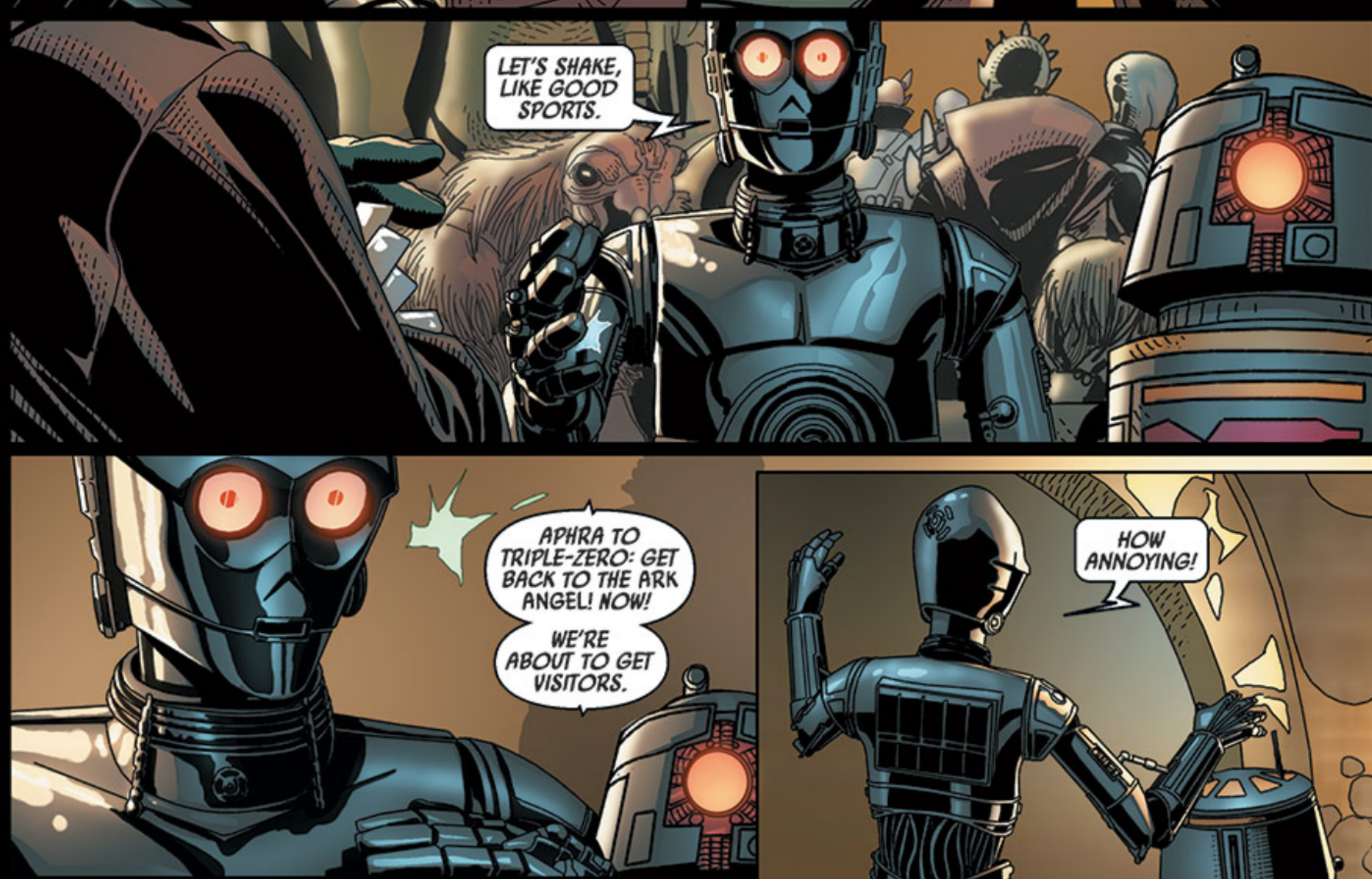
THE ANTE, YOU ARE THE BEST.


IMPERIAL RAIDERS APPROACHING! ALERT! ALERT!
OH, GREAT.


AND... MATCH.

HMMPH. WELL PLAYED.
DEFINITELY DIDN'T CHEAT IN ANY WAY.
BLEEP!

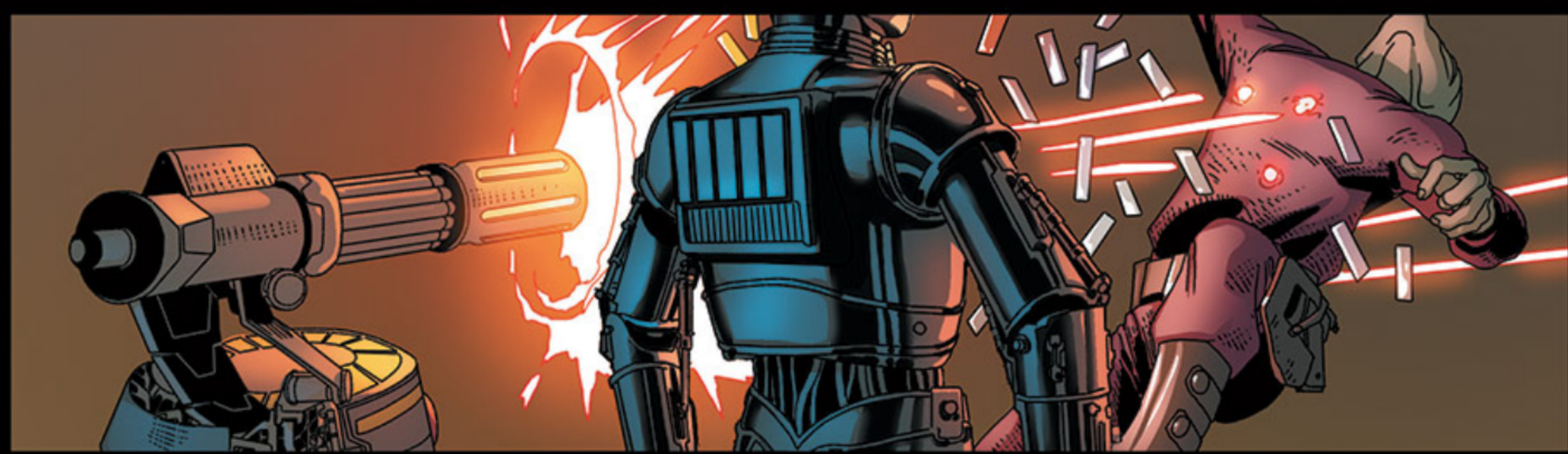
DON'T BE A SORE LOSER, DROID.
OH, I'M NOT A SORE LOSER. QUITE THE CONTRARY.


LET'S SHAKE, LIKE GOOD SPORTS.

APHRA TO TRIPLE-ZERO: GET BACK TO THE ARK ANGEL! NOW!
WE'RE ABOUT TO GET VISITORS.
HOW ANNOYING!

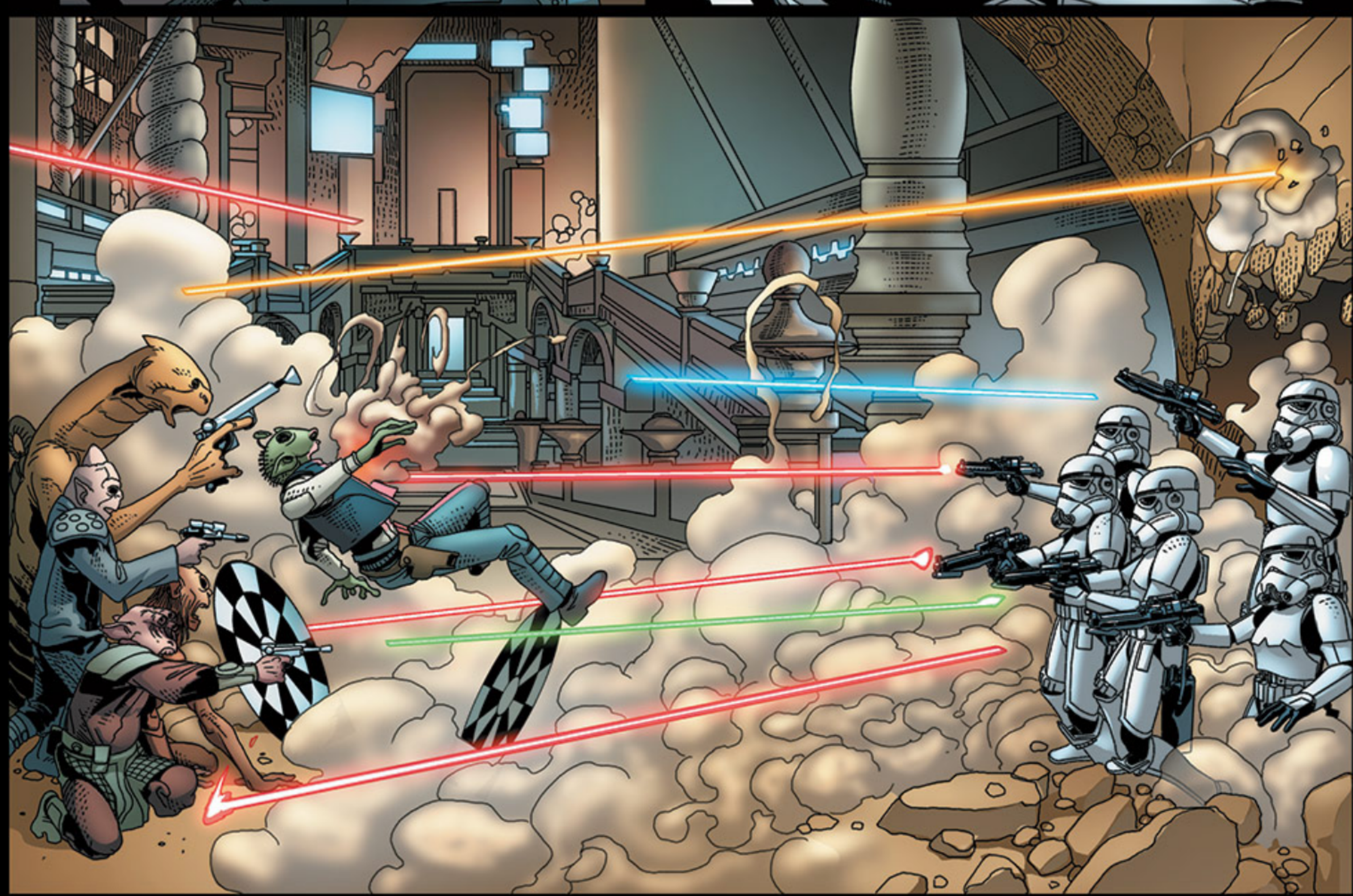
RESIST AND DIE.

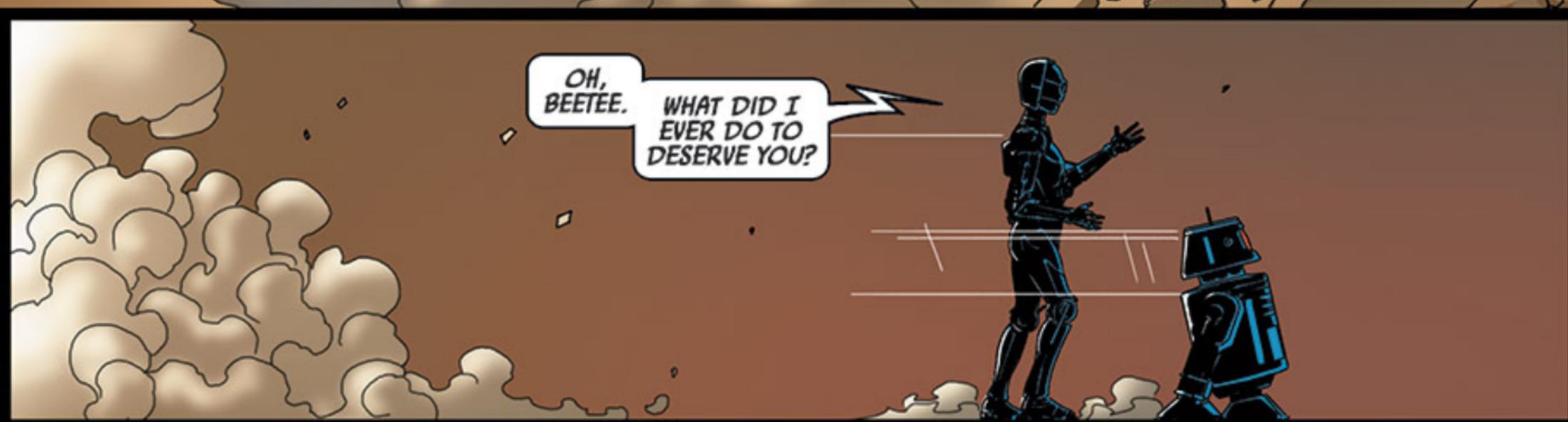
OH, IT DOES GRATE TO LET THAT AWFUL CHEATER LIVE, BEETEE. IF ONLY THERE WAS SOME--
BLEEP!



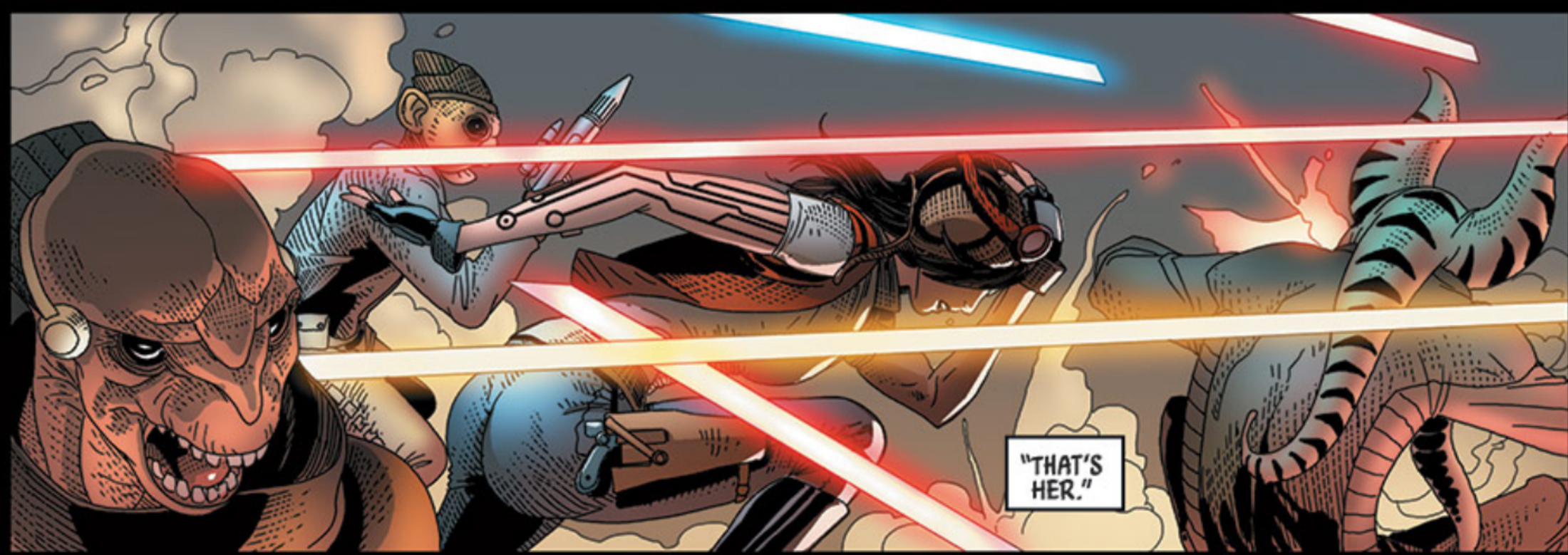
WHAT WAS--?

THEY'RE FIRING AT US!

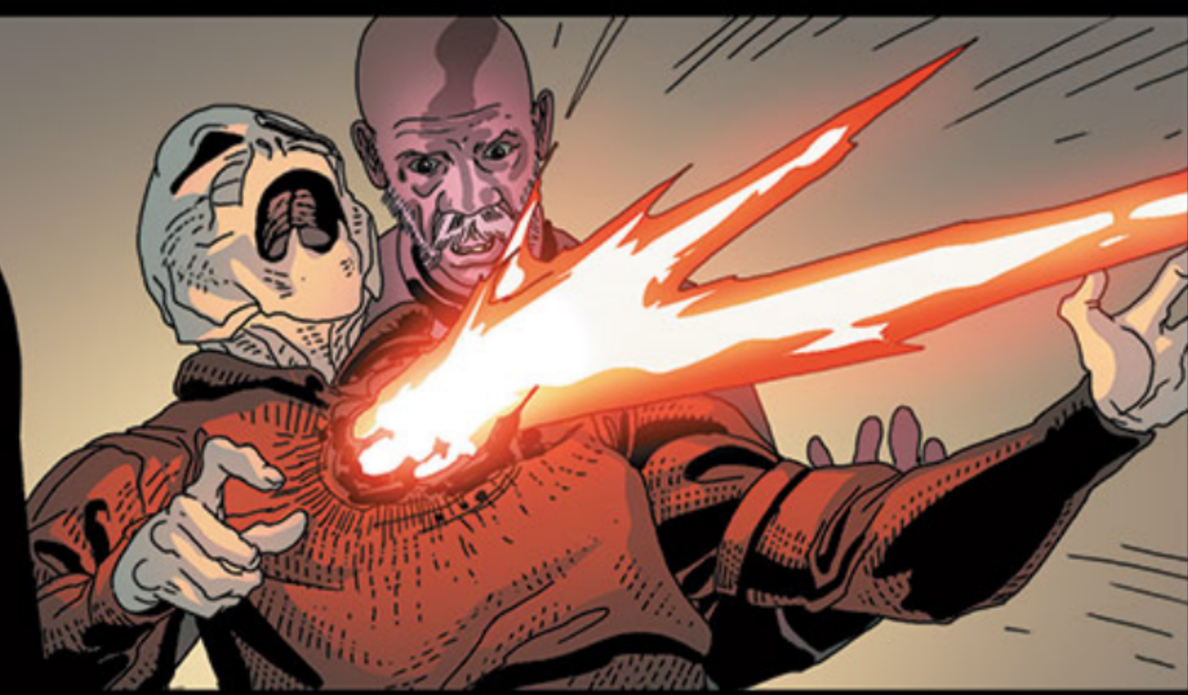



OH, BEETEE.
WHAT DID I EVER DO TO DESERVE YOU?

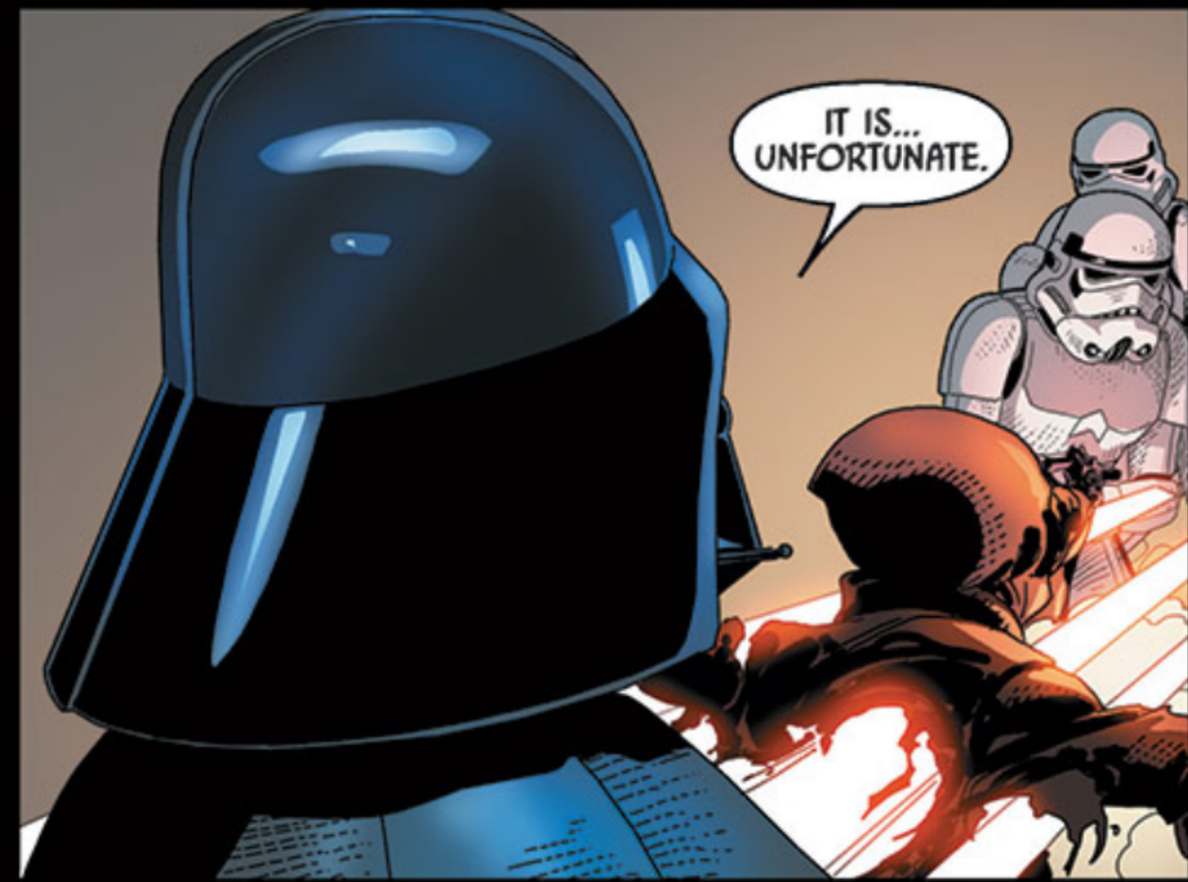
THIS WAY, LORD VADER!
I AM NOT IN THE MOOD FOR RESISTANCE, CRIMINAL.
I WILL GIVE YOU NONE. I AM THE ANTE AND I WISH TO HELP.
THE RECORDS BEHIND ME ARE ALL DESTROYED. THAT WAS PART OF THE SERVICE I OFFERED. THE RECORDS WOULD NEVER BE COMPROMISED.
HOWEVER, MY OWN KNOWLEDGE IS CONSIDERABLE. I'M SURE WE CAN COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING.
TO SHOW MY GOOD FAITH, I UNDERSTAND THE PLASMA DEVILS ARE CAUSING YOU SOME TROUBLE. THEIR BASE IS ON THE THANTEEN SUBSTRATA ON ANTHAN ONE.
AND I KNOW A LOT MORE.
ALL VERY INTERESTING, BUT OUR PRIMARY NEEDS ARE RATHER SIMPLER.
THE SON TUUL PRIDE'S TREASURES WERE STOLEN. WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE RESPONSIBLE PARTIES.
YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE YOUR LUCK.


"THAT'S HER."

SHE WAS HERE FOR A BUSINESS MEETING. PRIVATE, OF COURSE.
EXCELLENT. WHO IS SHE?

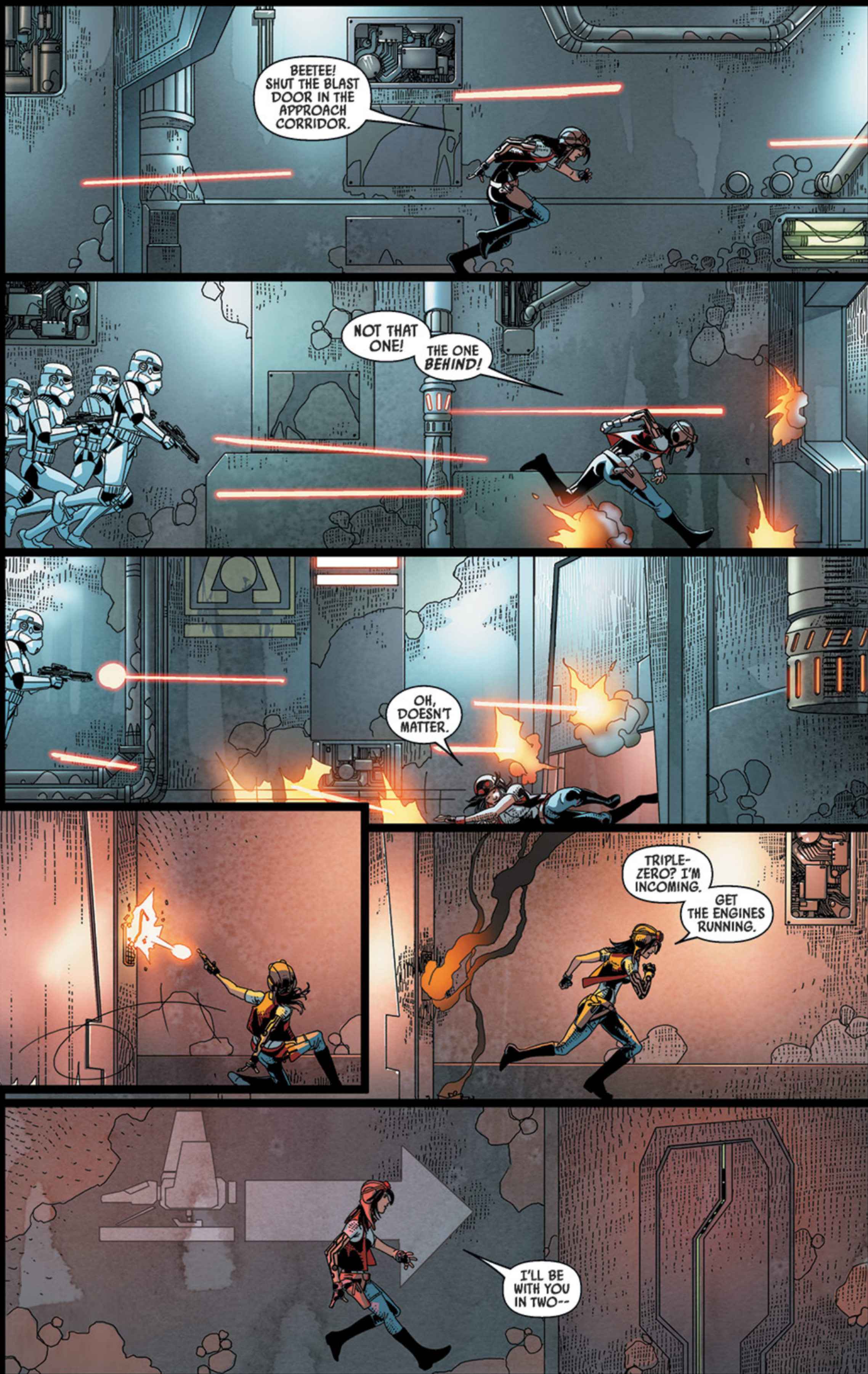


UNLUCKY STRAY SHOT.
HE COULD HAVE TOLD US SO MUCH MORE.


IT IS... UNFORTUNATE.

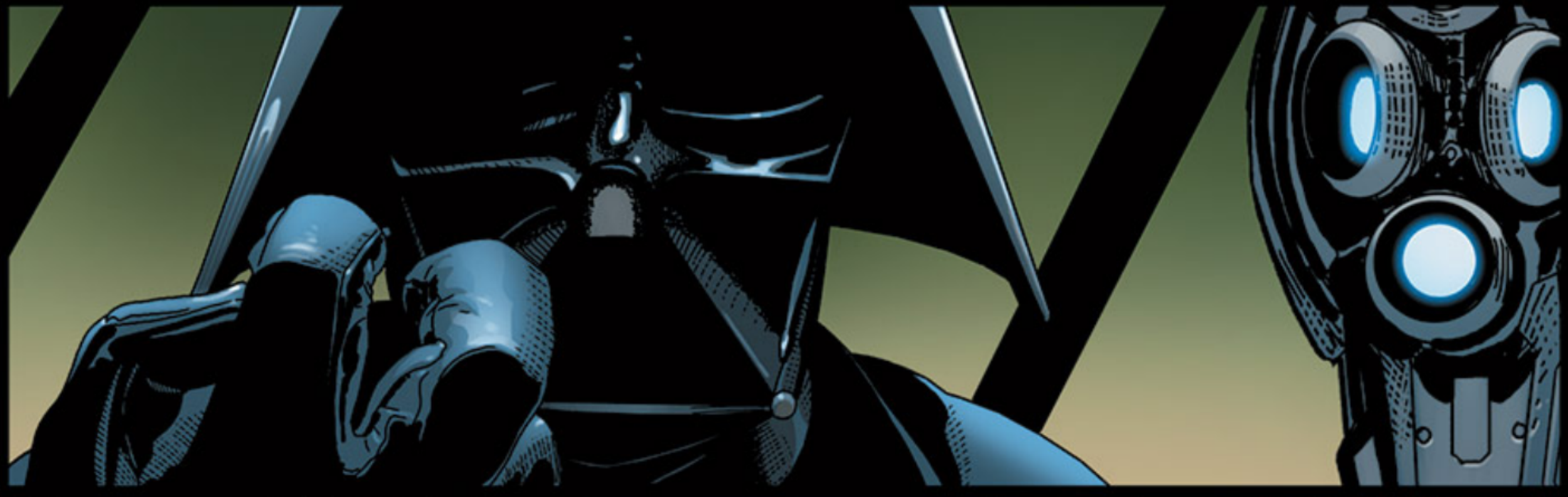
BUT WE HAVE OUR TARGET.
INSPECTOR THANOTH TO ALL STORMTROOPERS! AFTER HER!

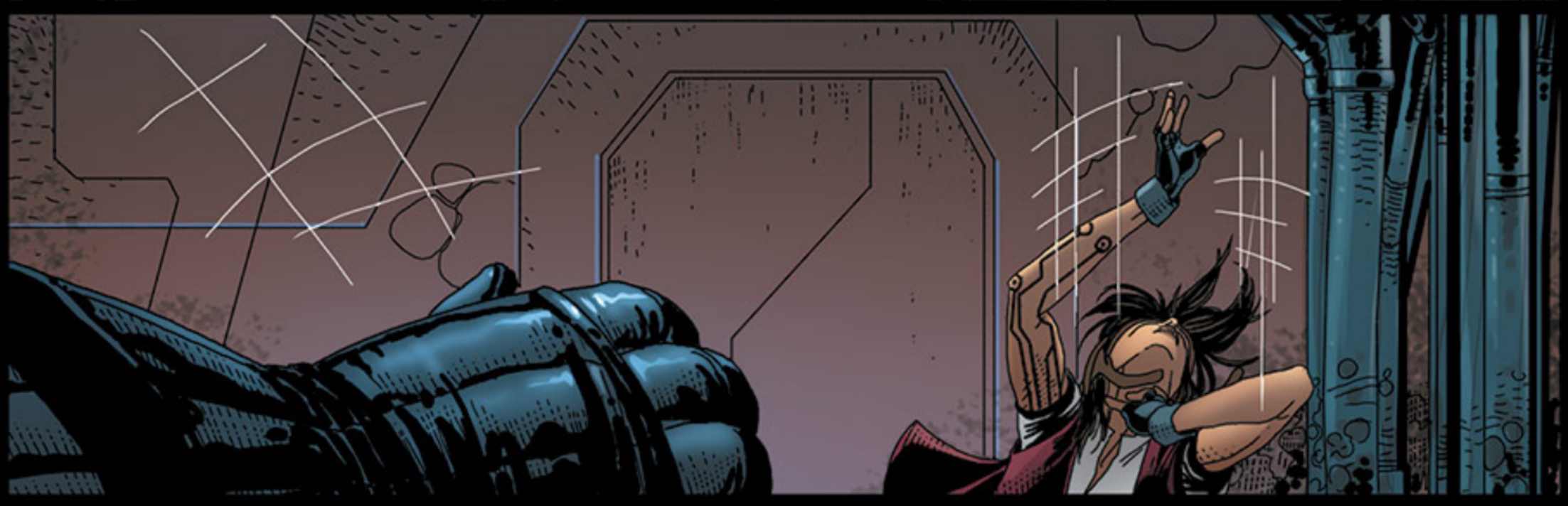
SHE WILL NOT ESCAPE.


BEETEE! SHUT THE BLAST DOOR IN THE APPROACH CORRIDOR.
NOT THAT ONE!
THE ONE BEHIND!
OH, DOESN'T MATTER.
TRIPLE-ZERO? I'M INCOMING.
GET THE ENGINES RUNNING.
I'LL BE WITH YOU IN TWO--

HI, BOSS.
THIS IS TIGHT, BUT I CAN GET AWAY. WE HAVE--
DO NOT STRUGGLE.

I KNOW... WHERE THE BOY IS.





TELL ME.
I WILL...

...LATER.

I--
SILENCE. YOU WILL ANSWER FOR THIS.

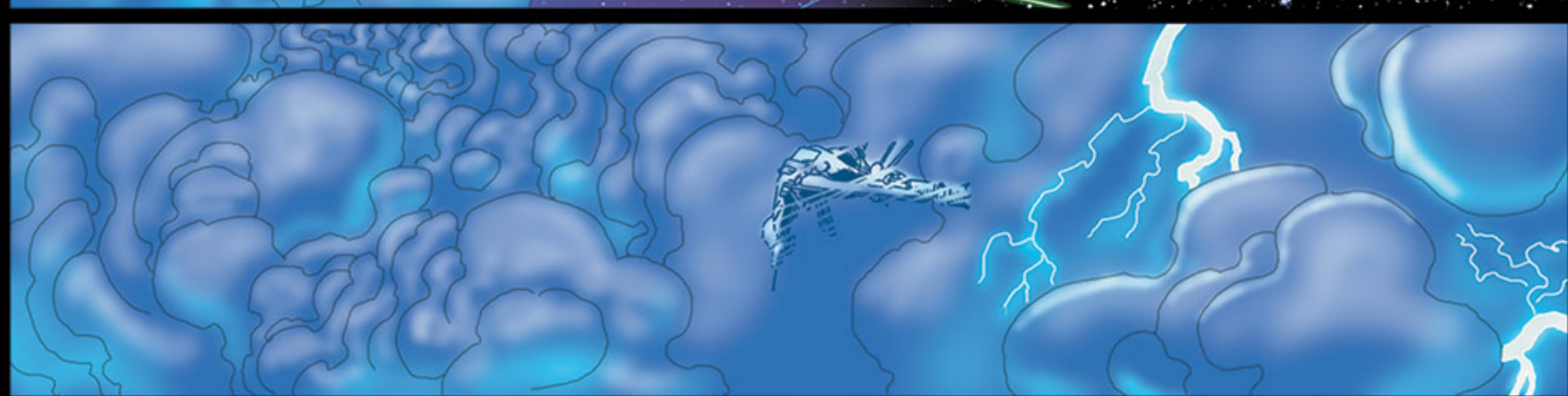
LORD VADER! ARE YOU--
SHE HAD PREPARED A TRAP.
AH, TRAPS...

"...ALWAYS GOOD TO SET A TRAP."

YOU KNOW, I THINK THE ANTE WAS RIGHT...

THESE STORMS REALLY ARE PRETTY!
I WOULD CONCUR, ASSUMING YOU MEANT "PRETTY LIKELY TO KILL YOU."
BLEEP!
I HAVE TO AGREE, BEETEE. BEING TERMINATED WOULD CURTAIL OUR FUTURE PLANS FOR HAVOC. CAN WE MAKE SPEED, MISTRESS APHRA?

ALMOST THROUGH. ALMOST...

"YOU SEE, LORD VADER--

"I PLOTTED OUR BLOCKADE MOST CAREFULLY. THERE IS NO ESCAPE."